

Heretic

by MyArtIsInWords

Category: Halo

Genre: Drama, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2007-06-26 21:22:19

Updated: 2007-06-26 21:22:19

Packaged: 2016-04-26 23:07:50

Rating: T

Chapters: 5

Words: 1,016

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: Does one burn seal fate? One Elite dares ask. Written for my friend Tara on Halo PC.

## 1. Found

Anva looked out to sea. The majestic water and warm sand were like nothing on his planet. He savored all of these new pleasures.

He did not savor the means of which he got here.

Being a soldier had its perks: free food, cool weaponry, shiny armor—there was something about the orders he was given a few days earlier that troubled him.

Genocide. Those were his orders: complete genocide of VSL-184. He wanted to hate them, maybe even go AWOL this time, like with the siege of VAS-16.

Except the Prophets themselves had ordered this.

"Must they always be late?" Keha asked him.

"Not late. Busy," Anva replied. Other missions, other dropships.

"Screw that."

"Not your choice."

Keha never meant bad. Even though he was far ahead of Anva as far as rank went, accidents did happen. And it cost him his rank. Keeping his golden armor and sword, but reduced to frontline combat with worthless grunts and cowardly jackals.

Anva, on the other hand, was a brave leader. He wore black armor; that of a special operations captain. He led elites and grunts into

battles which seemed hopeless, only to slaughter the opposing force.

To the Covenant, race did not matter. Allegiance did.

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Fifteen days after the attack, and still no signs of transportation. Anva didn't seem to mind, but Keha did.

When Anva was in his dreamlike stasis, he would walk for hours, usually surprised at where he ended up. He found himself near a cove. The sound of the wash hitting the rocks, and echoing in the cove calmed him. Anva started to feel a little exhausted from walking in the sun for so long. He entered the cove and lay down.

A squeak rang out.

Anva got up, turned around and whipped a plasma pistol out. Nothing. He approached. As he got closer he could make out a crouched form. Then it was smaller.

He got close enough to see what the source of the noise was. It was a baby elite.

It was scared of him.

Come out, he whispered.

It didn't move.

"It's okayâ€|" He dropped the gun. I won't hurt. He held his hands out like a father to child. And it came.

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The baby was female, and, upon closer inspection, seemed to have received a burn on her arm.

Probably from a misfire, he muttered.

How this girl had survived the attack was beyond himâ€| waitâ€| what was she doing on the island in the first place.

He held the girl, and his hand passed over a strange bump. He looked.

On her chest there was a large burn. It formed a shape.

She was a heretic.

## 2. Hostile?

"Is she hostile?" First words spoken by Keha.

"She's a baby, you moron!"

"You never knowâ€|"

The girl kept muttering the same sound. It sounded like  
"tawa."

"Tarah it is then."

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Day 20, and rations were starting to get low.

Tarah gnawed on the hard cracker she was given; her saliva running down the cracker and onto her hands and forearms. She was so hypnotized into breaking the cracker; she didn't seem to notice Anva when he mopped the saliva off every once in a while.

Keha yawned. "I'm going to bed."

Anva, on the other hand, stood by the radio in his room, and continued radioing for an extraction.

Day 30. Tarah was swimming already. She was having fun, and splashing away in the shallow end of the water. She liked it there. Anva didn't feel comfortable with her in the water, so vulnerable.

And he was troubled. Why would they send a good squadron out for a successful genocide if they were not going to pick them up? Abandonment? Possibly, but he had to keep trying. He frowned. He hated the damned radio.

Tarah flicked some water at him and laughed.

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Anva woke. The radio was transmitting, and he rushed over to it.

"Hello?"

"This is Covenant Transport 148929. Status, Captain 'Orpusee?"

"We're fine. We have a child with us."

"A heretic child?"

He was shocked, and Tarah started crying. "â€|Yes."

"You know what to do. If she is alive when boarding, you will be left behind."

He dropped the headset. Cradling Tarah in his arms, he shushed her to sleep again. And he wouldn't let her go.

### 3. Surrender

The ship touched down on the 42nd day. Keha greeted his wife, who had undertaken the 1000 light-year journey to see him. They embraced, and

a Cleric stepped out, accompanied by five honor guards.

"Your commanding officer?" the emotionless servant asked Keha.

"Inside."

The Cleric entered the tent. And there they were.

Soldier and heretic: friend and foe.

Anva expected this.

The Cleric looked at him politely, but his tone was anything but:

"Put the child down."

Anva stood. "I am not afraid of your rank."

"So what are you afraid of?"

"Losing hope."

"Is that her name?"

"No. Her name is Tarah."

"Very nice. I should name my child that, assuming that you allow me to leave this planet alive and unscathed."

"I will not harm you."

He whipped out a plasma pistol and aimed it at the girl. "But I will."

#### 4. Loss

The dropship left the ground, and departed from the planet. Keha looked back, knowing his friend had given himself up because of one little girl.

"She was a heretic," the Cleric assured him. "It was a necessary sacrifice."

Keha could beg to differ.

#### 5. Hope

Anva watched the ship go off. Tarah crawled next to him.

"Looks like we're on our own now." He looked down at her, and she looked up at him, both with large grins on their face.

She broke her cracker.

End

file.